

Newark Associations

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REPORT
OF THE
POLICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE
[COMMITTEE OF CONCERN.]

Rev. Horace P. Sharper
Co-Chairman

TO: The Executive Committee of the Committee of Concern:

INTRODUCTION.

Your subcommittee on Police and Legal Affairs has given careful consideration to the problems arising out of the relationships between Newark's poverty community and its police department and offers some recommendations that may aid in reducing these problems.

At the outset it is abundantly evident that there is a great deal of hostility between the poverty community and the police department. Both these groups distrust and badly misunderstand each other. It is not the function of this report to judge whether there is justification for this mistrust on the part of either side. Rather, your subcommittee, is concerned that the two groups, rather than working together to solve Newark's problems, are drawn into two separate and seemingly warring camps. Solutions, not recriminations, are needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

national authority on police departments and law

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enforcement should be hired to study and report on what steps should be taken to improve the Newark Police Department. This expert should be hired and paid for by the Committee of Concern, rather than the City, so that there can be no doubts as to the integrity of his report. Your subcommittee realizes that in the area of police affairs and community relations we are amateurs and that expert aid is needed.

2. If the Negro is to have confidence in Newark's entire system of law enforcement, he must be made to feel a part of it. Specifically, steps must be taken:

A. To have many more Negroes serve on grand and petit juries.

B. To encourage Negroes to join the police department.

C. To fairly promote those negroes who are now presently in the department.

3. To increase the number of Negroes in the department, Negroes must be made aware that there is equal opportunity for Negro police officers. At present, ranking Negro police officers are being assigned to staff rather than line duties. For example, Captain Williams has been assigned to the community relations department rather than being placed in command of a

precinct. Had a Negro been in command of the Fourth Precinct last summer's disturbance may well not have occurred. Another factor discouraging negroes from joining the force is the pattern of segregated assignments to patrol cars. Pairing of officers to squad cars should be done either on the Army "duty-roster" system or by placing more experienced men with less experienced men. The present system of assigning two negroes or two white officers to a squad car breeds distrust by all.

4. The Police Department may be losing the opportunity of recruiting well qualified men both white and black but requiring perfect records. A man should not be disqualified from police service because of a minor offense committed as a youth.

5. Newark must pay police higher salaries. Police work is hard; it involves long hours; holiday work, being out in rain and snow and facing real dangers. Newark needs the best officers and will have to pay for them.

6. Police officers should show respect towards all civilians, both white and black. Addressing some as "sir" rather than "hey you" creates an attitude of respect in the listener.

7. All police officers in uniform should be required to

wear name tags above their jacket pocket. This is now required by many suburban police departments and by the military. When one's name is on public display, one tends to obey departmental rules more closely.

8. The factory-mass production approach of Newark's Municipal Court must be changed. New, clean and orderly court rooms are needed. Moreover, Newark needs full time magistrates who are not subject to the time demands of private law practices. And these magistrates must be selected on the basis of legal ability not political involvements.

9. The quality of law enforcement in Newark's poverty neighborhoods must be improved. Neither the negro nor white is safe on many of Newark's streets. Specifically:

A. More police officers should be assigned to the central ward.

B. More foot patrols must be used in high crime areas.

C. Police officers need better physical training. Too many officers are simply too fat. An officer in first rate shape is in far better condition to control an unruly crowd or apprehend a fleeing criminal. Moreover, when an offender can be handcuffed without need of gun or club, the potential for crowd excitement over the arrest is reduced.

D. Police officers must learn restraint in the use of fire arms. Newark is not a motion picture "cow-town." A shot fired in a crowded city can readily carry and hit an innocent bystander. Police in other cities are learning to use modern scientific weapons in their war on crime.

10. Residents of Newark Housing Authority projects live in constant fear of crimes of violence. Large numbers of plain-clothesmen should be assigned to patrolling the corridors of these projects.